

DELL
XPS 13

Price TBC

From Dell 0844 444 3530

By taking its time, Dell has had a chance to produce an excellent laptop. Rather than creating an entirely new design, Dell has based the XPS 13 on its existing high-end products, and it looks the better for it. We took a look at an early sample.

The XPS 13 has a fantastic minimalist look, with a metal lid, smooth curves and a carbon-fibre body. Despite its 13.3in display the laptop is surprisingly compact, even for an Ultrabook; by reducing the depth of the chassis, Dell has made the XPS 13 look much smaller than its competitors, but it has pulled this off without sacrificing rigidity.

The full-size keyboard is comfortable to type on, thanks to its bouncy, responsive keys. All the punctuation keys are in the right places and there's a white LED backlight for typing in dim conditions. The touchpad is a joy to use, despite not having separate buttons – its smooth finish creates almost no resistance, and it coped well with having multiple fingers on its surface at once.

SUMMARY

VERDICT Dell has taken the Ultrabook specification and made something beautiful. An excellent choice, but not quite the best

ULTRA-PORTABLE LAPTOP Intel Core i7-2637M, 4GB RAM, 256GB disk, Intel HD Graphics 3000 graphics, 13.3in widescreen LCD, PART CODE TBC
DETAILS www.dell.co.uk

As we've come to expect from Dell laptops, the screen is fantastic. Its 1,366x768 resolution is only average for an Ultrabook, but images and text looked incredibly sharp. Colours were vibrant without looking overblown, so that pictures looked natural even at medium brightness. The screen's glossy finish can make reflections a problem, but with ample screen tilt and decent viewing angles, you shouldn't struggle to find a comfortable working position.

Our review unit came with a Core i7-2637M processor, which runs at 1.7GHz. It also had 4GB of RAM and a spacious 256GB SSD but, as with most Dell laptops, you can customise the specification when ordering. This configuration scored 45 overall on our multimedia

benchmarks, so it's more than powerful enough for everyday tasks whether you're tied to a desk or on the move. With a battery that lasted seven and a half hours in our light-use test, the XPS 13 is ideal for travellers who are rarely near a mains socket.



Our main concern is the lack of connectivity. Two USB ports, one of which is the faster USB3, a 3.5mm headset port and a Mini DisplayPort output are all you get. There's no Ethernet port, although 802.11n is fine for getting online.

Like all Ultrabooks, the XPS 13 uses Intel's integrated graphics for video and games. It can play HD content at 720p on the built-in display and 1080p on an external monitor, but modern games are too strenuous – our Dirt 3 test limped along at just 12.7fps.

Dell's XPS 13 stands out. Its performance is spot on, and the gorgeous screen and fantastic keyboard make it easy to use. However, it would benefit from extra ports. If this model were to cost around £1,000 then it would be a Best Buy winner; otherwise, Asus's ZenBook UX31 is the best choice.